

Moscow Says Better Ties Wanted With U.S.

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MOSCOW, Feb. 12 — The Soviet government, continuing to trumpet its anti-American initiatives in Communist Asia, today peeped its interest in improving relations with the United States.

Unlike China, North Viet-Nam and North Korea, the countries being toured by Premier Alexei N. Kosygin, the Soviet Union has no outstanding territorial or military quarrels with the United States and sets a correspondingly higher premium on detente.

So Pravda returned in passing today to Soviet-American ties, a theme ignored in Wednesday's Soviet Vietnamese declaration in which Moscow formalized its aid commitment to Hanoi.

Pravda said the Soviet government "invariably" seeks better relations.

But, it added, "this is a mutual process. It is incompatible with aggressive manifestations off a policy capable of crossing out steps to improve Soviet-American relations.

U.S. Concerned

By "aggressive" the Communist Party paper meant the air attacks on North Viet-Nam made by the United States to retaliate for Viet Cong raids on Americans in South Viet-Nam.

American officials had expected and have seen only the faintest bows toward Washington while Kosygin continued his political safari in Asia.

They are known to be concerned, however, lest the Soviet government privately believe its public charges of U.S. blame for any deteriora-

tion of U.S.-Soviet relations in the wake of the Viet-Nam shooting, the Kosygin mission and the demonstration authorized earlier this week against the American Embassy here.

Diplomats think they understand why the Kremlin has taken this anti-American tack: to hide Communist differences behind a facade of militancy and thus to soften a Sino-Soviet showdown at the Moscow-called meeting of Communist parties, scheduled March 1.

These officials wish to impress on the Kremlin that it cannot damage American interests in Asia and at the same time either reap the benefits of detente or avoid responsibility for heightening international tension.

Political Risk

Grim determination and a tinge of regret mark the American view that the Soviet government has chosen to put Asia over America. It is assumed here that such scheduled goodwill builders as Senate hearings on consular convention and on East-West trade will be reviewed. In addition to the military risks which in the American view

Moscow has assumed, it has also assumed the political risk of strengthening elements—the government in North Viet-Nam and the insurgents in South Viet-Nam—which might later spit in its eye.

The political risk lies in the possibility that the Vietnamese might take Moscow's help in the dispute between Communists and non-Communists, and Peking's side in the dispute between Soviets and Chinese.

According to one tale suspected as apocryphal, a Soviet official conceded privately that he would prefer that the U.S. stay in South Viet-Nam—to give Moscow a political target and rallying point and to avoid loss of Viet-Nam to Peking.

Moscow's doubts are reflected in its equivocal treatment of the Communist-led National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam. It has feted the Front and several months ago announced the opening of a Moscow headquarters for it. But it has avoided accepting it as a government in exile and, according to the local North Vietnamese embassy, the Front's Moscow office has yet to open.